

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 ALGIER 00960 01 OF 02 161216Z  
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 AF-10 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04  
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01  
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 MCT-01 ACDA-07 TRSE-00 DHA-02  
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R 161055Z APR 77  
FM AMEMBASSY ALGIERS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6280  
INFO AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT  
AMEMBASSY RABAT  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK  
CINCEUR

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ALGIERS 0960

CINCEUR FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PFOR, MOPS, SS  
SUBJECT: SAHARA: POLISARIO KEEPS AT IT

1. SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH POLISARIO NOT FARING WELL  
DIPLOMATICALLY, IT APPEARS FROM JOURNALISTS' ACCOUNTS THAT  
GUERRILLAS ARE OPERATING FREELY IN EASTERN PART OF  
SAHARA FOLLOWING MOROCCAN WITHDRAWAL FROM OUTPOSTS THERE.  
POLISARIO SEEMS ABLE TO CONDUCT LIMITED RAIDS VIRTUALLY  
ANYWHERE THROUGHOUT SAHARA AND ADJACENT AREAS AND TO HAVE  
IMPOSED RESTRICTIONS ON BOU CRAA PHOSPHATE OPERATION.  
JOURNALIST REPORT THAT BY CONTRAST WITH MAURITANIANS, WHO  
GET ON RELATIVELY WELL WITH SAHRAOUI, MOROCCAN VIEW OF  
LOCAL POPULATION OFTEN APPEARS REMOTE AND SCORNFUL, AND  
THIS ATTITUDE RECIPROCATED BY SAHRAOUI. MOROCCAN AND  
MAURITANIAN CONTROL OF STRATEGIC POSITIONS IN FORMER  
COLONY REMAINS SECURE, AND POLISARIO DOES NOT HAVE  
CAPACITY TO CHALLENGE THIS CONTROL. AT SAME TIME,  
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PAGE 02 ALGIER 00960 01 OF 02 161216Z

GUERRILLAS' ABILITY TO MAKE LIFE DIFFICULT FOR THEIR  
ADVERSARIES SEEMS TO BE GROWING. END SUMMARY.

2. AS READERS OF FBIS-REPROUCED COMMUNIQUE HAVE NOTED,  
POLISARIO CONTINUES TO CLAIM MAJOR BATTLEFIELD SUCCESSES  
AGAINST MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS IN SAHARA. FOR MARCH, 396  
MOROCCANS CLAIMED KILLED, 360 WOUNDED, 59 VEHICLES DESTROYED

AND LARGE QUANTITY OF WEAPONS CAPTURED. INCIDENTS REPORTED IN COMMUNIQUE INCLUDE USUAL AMBUSHES OF MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIAN FORCES, AS WELL AS ATTACKS ON TOWNS IN SAHARA, MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA. MOST SPECTACULAR RECENT INCIDENT IS ALLEGED DAMAGE BY POLISARIO FIRE TO SPANISH SHIP CAUGHT IN "TERRITORIAL WATERS" BETWEEN DAKHLA AND BOUDJADOR APRIL 6. POLISARIO CLAIMS 10 ENEMY BESSELS DESTROYED SINCE BEGINNING OF HOSTILITIES.

3. DURING PRESS CONFERENCE AT END OF MARCH, SAHRAOUI DEFENSE MINISTER IBRAHIM GHALI ASSERTED THAT 14,000 MOROCCANS AND MAURITANIANS HAS BEEN KILLED OR WOUNDED SINCE BEGINNING OF HOSTILITIES AND THAT POLISARIO NOW HOLDS 400 MOROCCAN AND MAURITANIAN PRISONERS. TWO HUNDRED SAHRAOUI HAVE MET "HEROES' DEATHS" DURING THIS PERIOD ACCORDING TO MINISTER.

4. OVER PAST SEVERAL WEEKS WE HAVE INTERVIEWED SEVERAL JOURNALISTS WHO HAVE GONE ON EXTENSIVE TOURS WITH POLISARIO RAIDING PARTIES INSIDE SAHARA OR WHO HAVE SPENT TIME WITH POLISARIO IN TINDOUF REGION. FOLLOWING OBSERVATIONS EMERGING FROM THESE DISCUSSIONS ARE OF INTEREST:

A. FREEDON OF MOVEMENT: ALL JOURNALISTS STRESS THAT, FOLLOWING MOROCCAN WITHDRAWAL FROM EASTERN OUTPOSTS, POLISARIO NOW MOVES FREELY THROUGHOUT EASTERN PART OF FORMER COLONY AND IN ADJACENT AREAS OF MOROCCO AND MAURITANIA. FOR EXAMPLE, TWO JOURNALISTS RECENTLY COMPLETED WEEK-LONG JOURNEY FROM TINDOUF TO TIFARITI ON MAURITANIAN FRONTIER, SOUTH INTO MAURITANIA, NORTH TO SMARA WHERE THEY OBSERVED POLISARIO BOMBARDMENT, AND

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 ALGIER 00960 01 OF 02 161216Z

THEN BACK TO TINDOUF. JOURNALISTS SAW NO MOROCCAN TROOPS THROUGHOUT THIS FORAY AND WERE ABLE TO MOVE DIRECTLY ALONG TRACK FROM TINDOUF TO TIFARITI RATHER THAN SKIRTING FORMER COLONY AS RAIDING PARTIES USED TO DO. JOURNALISTS DID BEST THEY COULD TO KEEP TRACK OF THEIR WHEREABOUTS AND BELIEVED THEY WERE WHERE POLIARIO SAID THEY WERE.

B. POLISARIO DISPOSITIONS: JOURNALISTS IMPRESSED BY STRENGTH IN WHICH POLISARIO MOVED THROUGH DESERT AND BY ALMOST CERTAIN EXISTENCE OF PERMANENT GUERRILLA CAMPS WITHIN SAHARA. TWO JOURNALISTS WHO WENT TO TIFARITI AND SMARA TRAVELED IN CONVOY OF THIRTY VEHICLES WHICH INCLUDED LARGE TRUCKS (APPARENTLY WEST GERMAN DEUTZ VEHICLES OF TYPE BOUGHT BY ALGERIAN ARMY) AS WELL AS LAND ROVERS AND TOYOTA LAND CRUISERS. CONVOY MOVED BY DAY WITH LITTLE EFFORT TO CONCEAL ITSELF. FREQUENTLY DURING JOURNEY, CONVOY WOULD MEET WITH RELATIVELY LARGE POLISARIO PATROLS WHICH WERE APPARENTLY OPERATING FROM MORE OR LESS PERMANENT DESERT BASES. THESE GROUPS WERE OFTEN ENCAMPED NEAR SMALL TOWNS FROM WHICH MOROCCANS HAD WITHDRAWN BUT WHICH

POLISARIO COULD NOT REOCCUPY FOR FEAR OF BEING ATTACKED.  
JOURNALISTS CONVINCED THAT POLISARIO NOW HAS PERMANENT  
CACHES OF ARMS AND FUEL THROUGHOUT DESERT FOR USE DURING RAIDS.

C. ARMS AND COMMUNICATIONS: JOURNALISTS CONFIRMED THAT  
POLISARIO FIGHTERS NORMALLY EQUIPPED WITH KALASHNIKOV HAND  
WEAPONS. MORTARS APPARENTLY REMAIN PRIMARY WEAPON FOR  
BOMBARDMENTS. POLISARIO CLAIMS GREATER RADIO COMMUNICATIONS  
CAPABILITY WITHIN DESERT, BUT RAIDING PARTIES DO NOT SEEM TO  
CARRY RADIOS WITH THEM.LYNE

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PAGE 01 ALGIER 00960 02 OF 02 161304Z  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 ALGIERS 0960

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D. MOROCCNA-MAURITANIAN RAPPORT WITH POPULATION: JOURNALISTS  
UNANIMOUS IN REPORTING POOR RELATIONS BETWEEN MOROCCANS AND  
SAHRAOUI. ONE YOUNG SWEDISH RADIO REPORTER, WHO WENT ON SMARA  
RAID JUST DESCRIBED, SPENT SEVERAL WEEKS WITH MOROCCANS AND  
MAURITANIANS IN SAHARA PRIOR TO COMING TO ALGERIA, AND FOUND  
MOROCCANS CONTEMPTUOUS OF, AND ESTRANGED FROM, SAHRAOUI.  
MOROCCAN PRISONERS INTERVIEWED IN TINDOUF STRESSED THAT SHAARA  
NOT MOROCCAN. SERVICE IN SAHARA IS, ACCORDING TO SWEDE,  
HARDSHIP DUTY FOR MOROCCANS WITH EVERY CIVILIAN AND MILITARY  
OFFICIAL RECEIVING 100 PERCENT BONUS FOR BEING THERE.  
JOURNALIST SAID THAT SAHRAOUI, WITH EXCEPTION OF SOME WHO  
HAD COLLABORATED CLOSELY WITH SPANISH, RETURNED MOROCCAN  
DISLIKE. BY CONTRAST, MAURITANIANS RECEIVED NO BONUS FOR

SAHARA SERVICE AND, GIVEN CLOSER ETHNIC TIES, SAID TO GET ON MUCH BETTER WITH SAHRAOUI THAN DO MOROCCANS.

E. MOROCCAN GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES: JOURNALISTS SAW NO EVIDENCE OF MOROCCAN GUERRILLA ACTIVITIES WITHIN ALGERIA. AT  
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PAGE 02 ALGIER 00960 02 OF 02 161304Z

SAME TIME, THEY WERE STRUCK BY EXTREME CAUTION WITH WHICH ALGERIANS SEEK TO IDENTIFY POLISARIO PATROLS ENCOUNTERED IN DESERT, A SITUATION SUGGESTING PRESENCE OF MOROCCAN GUERRILLAS IN REGION.

F. REFUGEES: JOURNALISTS ASSERT THAT REFUGEES CONTINUING TO ARRIVE REGULARLY IN TINDOUF REGION. ALTHOUGH THEY RECOGNIZE POSSIBILITY OF SOME OF THESE PERSONS BEING FROM REGIONS OTHER THAN SAHARA, JOURNALISTS BELIEVE THAT MOST COME FROM FORMER COLONY.

G. BOU CRAA: JOURNALISTS WHO HAVE VISITED BOU CRAA ASSERT THAT PHOSPHATE MINES NOT OPERATING AND THAT ORE BEING TRUCKED TO EL AYOUN COMING FROM STOCKPILES. SWEDISH REPORTER NOTES THAT, ACCORDING TO MOROCCAN STATISTICS, CONVOY SYSTEM OF TRANSPORTING ORE COULD NEVER KEEP PACE WITH PRODUCTION CAPACITY OF MINES.

5. DIPLOMATIC ACTIVITY: AS HAS BEEN TRUE IN RECENT MONTHS, POLISARIO CAUSE APPEARS TO BE FARING LESS WELL DIPLOMATICALLY THAN MILITARILY. NACC MEETING IN NEW DELHI ENDORSED SPECIAL OAU SUMMIT ON SAHARA QUESTION, BUT THERE APPEARS TO BE LITTLE ENTHUSIASM WITHIN THAT ORGANIZATION FOR SUCH A GATHERING. ON ARAB FRONT, LOCAL PRESS ASSERTS THAT NINTH CONGRESS OF ARAB RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES IN ALGIERS EARLY THIS MONTH ACCORDED OBSERVER STATUS TO SAHRAOUI RED CRESCENT AND RECOMMENDED THAT SAHRAOUI BE GIVEN FULL MEMBERSHIP AT NEXT CONGRESS, SCHEDULED TO BE HELD IN TRIPOLI IN 1978.

6. AS HAS BEEN TRUE ON ONE OR TWO OCCASIONS IN PAST, POLISARIO PUT SOME DISTANCE BETWEEN ITSELF AND ALGERIA ON DIPLOMATIC FRONT BY DENOUNCING MOROCCO'S DESPATCH OF TROOPS TO ZAIRE. ALGERIANS HAVE SO FAR REFRAINED FROM MAKING COMPARABLE DECLARATION.

7. COMMENT: AS USUAL, POLISARIO COMMUNIQUE APPEAR TO HAVE  
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PAGE 03 ALGIER 00960 02 OF 02 161304Z

ONLY DISTANT CORRELATION WITH REALITY. WE FURTHER WONDER

IF ARAB RED CROSS AND RED CRESCENT SOCIETIES  
IN FACT WILLING TO ACCORD SAHRAVIAN FULL MEMBERSHIP GIVEN  
ARAB OPPOSITION TO POLISARIO CAUSE.

8. BEYOND THIS, WE SUGGEST THREE POINTS:

A. POLISARIO PROPAGANDA EFFORT VERY EFFECTIVE. IN AT  
LEAST ONE CASE, THAT OF MARVINE HOWE OF NY TIMES, JOURNALIST  
WHO CAME TO SAHARA TO SCOFF STAYED TO PRAISE, AND MOST OTHERS  
WHO SPEND TIME WITH GUERRILLAS AND AT REFUGEE CAMPS BECOME  
TRUE BELIEVERS. THESE OBSERVERS DO GREAT DEAL  
TO KEEP POLISARIO ON POLITICO-MILITARY MAP.

B. POLISARIO NOW APPEARS TO HAVE RUN OF EASTERN PART OF  
SAHARA. SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS SHOULD NOT BE EXAGGERATED; IN  
LAST YEARS OF THEIR RULE, SPANISH TENDED TO STAY OUT OF REMOTE  
REGIONS OF DESERT ALTHOUGH THEY DID CONTROL OUTLYING TOWNS.  
NEVERTHELESS, FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT WOULD APPEAR TO FACILITATE  
POLISARIO LOGISTICS.

C. ALTHOUGH EVIDENCE IS SOMEWHAT CONFLICTING, IT APPEARS  
THAT MOROCCANS NOT INGRATIATING THEMSELVES WITH SAHRAVIAN.  
THIS WOULD SEEM TO COMPLICATE FOR MOROCCANS TASK OF TAKING OVER  
COLONY ON PERMANENT BASIS.

9. IN BRIEF, MOROCCANS WELL ESTABLISHED STRATEGICALLY AND  
POLISARIO REMAINS IN NO POSITION TO CHANGE THIS SITUATION.  
AT SAME TIME, HOWEVER, POLISARIO, FAR FROM WITHERING ON VINE,  
SEEMS TO BE ENHANCING ITS CAPACITY FOR MAKING SAHARAN LIFE  
UNPLEASANT FOR ITS ADVERSARIES. LYNE

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## Message Attributes

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